

Two More Political Prisoners

The trial in New York of C. E. Ruthenberg and I. E. Ferguson resulted in their conviction by a carefully picked jury of business men and their sentence to serve an indeterminate term of from five to ten years in the state penitentiary. They go there to join Jim Larkin and Ben Gitlow who were convicted and given the same sentences early in this year.

The practice of engaging high-priced lawyers to make elaborate legal defense was not followed in this case; the defendants being satisfied that it is impossible for advocates of the workers' cause to get justice in the class courts of America. On the contrary they made their persecution an occasion for communist propaganda, boldly proclaiming in open court their adherence to revolutionary principles. I. E. Ferguson, himself a lawyer of standing, conducted the defense. Extracts from his brilliant speech to the jury bring out clearly the uncompromising attitude of the two communist agitators.

"I have not felt at any time during the course of this trial," he said, "that Charles Ruthenberg and Isaac Ferguson are defendants in this case. The real defendants are those who are responsible for this prosecution.

Opposing Capitalism, Their Crime.

"We were not indicted for advocating criminal anarchy; we were indicted for opposing the capitalist system which controls the government, newspapers, courts, schools, theaters, magazines, — all the organs for moulding opinion and creating prejudice.

"The same brutal capitalistic campaign of terrorism against organized labor which is indicted by the Left Wing manifesto, as printed in the Revolutionary Age for July 5th, 1919, brought us into this courtroom, but we are not terrorized.

"If communism is so persuasive that it cannot be admitted to platforms of political discussion to determine whether it is right or wrong, you cannot crush it by jailing those who advocate it. If communism is so dynamic, so much a part of social conditions that a mere statement of its principles will convince and convert, it will live no matter how many go to prison for it.

"We are charged with advocating a general strike to overthrow the government. You cannot

suppress the strike! The strike is the life need of the workers. Strikes come because workers do not get enough to live on. We say this is no sort of a social system to ask Americans to live under!

"The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable that it ought to be kept alive.' So Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1787.

"In 'The New Freedom', Woodrow Wilson, the student, writes:

"I am aware that those who advocate the measures which we have been discussing are denounced as dangerous radicals. I am particularly interested to observe that the men who cry out most loudly against what they call radicalism are the men who find their private game in politics is being spoiled."

Unrest Cannot Be Jailed.

"You stop nothing by silencing Ruthenberg and Ferguson in a penitentiary. Social forces now at work contain the logic of their own growth. Unrest is not created by agitators, but by the conditions of life. Social disturbances come because the government is not able to meet the actual problems of existence.

"Under the conditions of this statute relating to criminal anarchy you should have heard of our getting leadpipe and gunpowder and preparing bombs to blow up buildings and kill individuals in power. Instead you have heard of educational propaganda, organization activities, and concerted efforts to bring about a better understanding among the workers of their class needs.

"And that work will go on regardless of what happens to us. The posts vacated by our imprisonment will be filled by others who will come forward from the ranks to take up the flag when we drop it at the prison door. Persecution and imprisonment could not hold back the movement in Russia and they cannot hold it back here. The proletarian revolution is invincible."

ROBERT MINOR SPEAKING DATES.

Chicago November 6th, evening. He will be the principal speaker at the Third Anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

Milwaukee Sunday, the 7th, afternoon.

Racine, Wisc. Sunday, the 7th, evening.